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Montana. Parks  
Division  
Placid Lake  
State Recreation  
Area

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Mont. Department of Fish and Game

JAN 31 1978

MONTANA STATE COLLEGE  
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Helena, Montana 59601



# PLACID LAKE STATE RECREATION AREA:

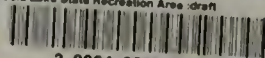
## DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Montana Department of Fish and Game,  
Parks Division

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Placid Lake State Recreation Area :draft



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## I. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION

### A. A Summary

Over the past several years the Department of Fish and Game has been negotiating with the Champion Timberlands Division of Champion International Corporation for the acquisition by donation of two tracts of property contiguous to Wild Lake. This lake is located in the Clearwater Valley about 30 miles NE of Vessalia in Eastern Cassia County. When negotiations were satisfactory the Department requested authority from the 1977 Legislature to spend Land Use Water Conservation Fund (LUWCF) matching money. This authority was granted. The value of the land donation would be matched with LUWCF monies in order to fund the proposed development.

This EIS addresses the probable effects the acquisition and development will have upon the existing environment.

Construction is scheduled to begin in late 1978.





SWAN LAKE

FLATHEAD LAKE

Polson

Ronan

209

93

Sun River

SEELEY LAKE

SLAMON LAKE

PLACID LAKE

Blackfoot River

Lincoln

200

287

Missouri River

HOLTER LAKE

15

Missoula

River

Helena

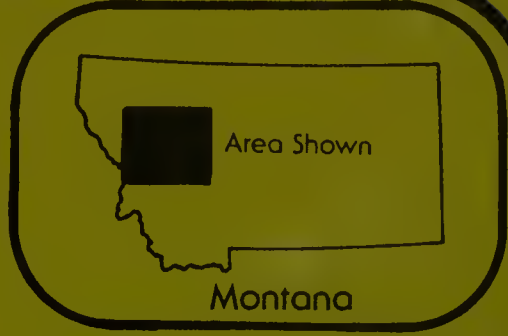
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12

CANYON FERRY



North  
Scale



Area Shown

Montana



ENTRY AREA

#### B. The Setting

Placid is a glacial lake in the Clearwater Valley, near the Clearwater chain of lakes, a group which includes Seeley, Salmon, and Inez. It lies about four miles west of Seeley, the second town northwest of Salmon, and three miles west of State Highway 10. Much of the surrounding country is forested, fairly moist--for Montana at least--and about 4,000 to 4500 feet above sea level. Land adjacent to Placid Lake is owned by the U.S. National Forest, Clearwater State Forest, timber companies, and a few private holdings by recreationists and ranchers.

The 1185-acre lake is fed by Placid Creek from the west and drains by Owl Creek, a Clearwater tributary. Champion owns about half of the shoreline and leases cabin sites around the lake. Cabin sites are also leased to private parties by the State Forestry Division on their lands.

Placid Lake is intensively used and popular recreation area according to the Missoula County Comprehensive Plan. Recreationists presently obtain access to the lake over the property Champion International has agreed to donate to the Department. Other Champion International property which is presently being used by the recreating public in various areas at Owl Creek, Salmon Lake, and at several small lakes within the boundaries of the U.S. National Forest.

The U.S. Forest Service offers three public campgrounds and boat launches at Seeley Lake. The Department of Fish and Game has a small campground at Harper Lake Fishing Access north of Clearwater Junction.

#### C. The Donation

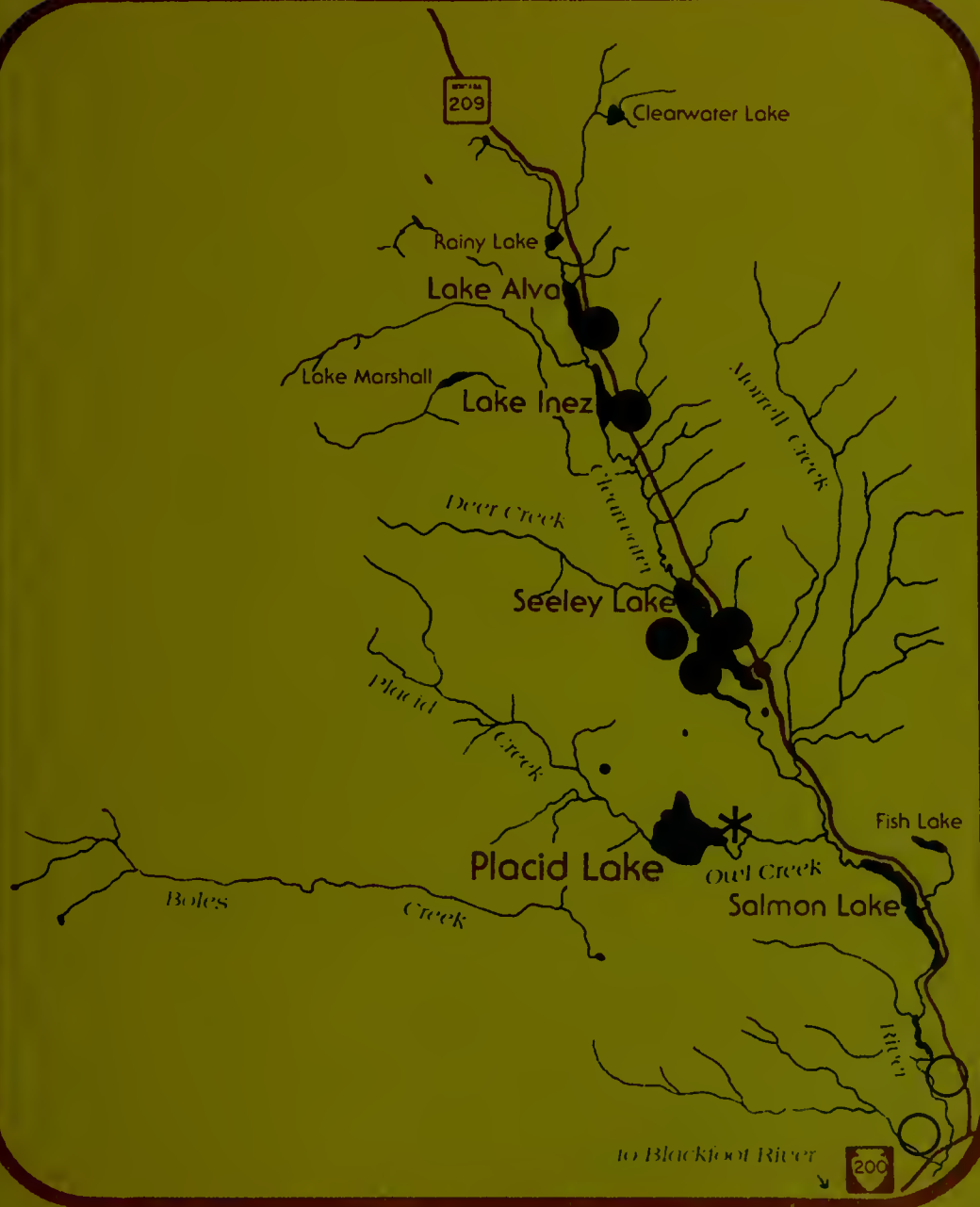
Champion's Placid donation consists of two tracts: one of about 1.5-acre tract at the northern end of the lake, and a 3-acre tract at the southeast boundary of the lake.<sup>1</sup> The larger tract includes some fairly level ground east of the lakeshore road and several acres southeast of Owl Creek, an area which will not be developed.

The smaller parcel lies between the Placid Creek road and the lake. The larger lies on both sides of the present cabin site road near the southern shore. Both tracts are forested, have cabin sites adjacent, and are used intensively by the public. Neither tract presently has any developed facilities except for pit latrines.

<sup>1</sup> For details on public recreation in the area--including more on local, state, and federal facilities and plans see pages 20-24.



# Clearwater Drainage



## Legend

- \* Proposed Campsite
- Existing Campsite
- Fishing Access
- Road
- ↑ North

## Bar Scale





LONG-RANGE  
 MASTER DEVELOPMENT PLAN  
 PLACID LAKE RECREATION AREA

North Bar Scale 0000

PREPARED BY  
 DEPT. OF FISH & GAME  
 PARKS DIVISION



#### D. Proposed Development Plan

##### 1. Placid Lake Recreation Area (Southeast Area)

- a. Lockable entrance gate
- b. Area orientation
- c. 3 loops with camping stalls
- d. Boat trailer parking
- e. Day-use area
- f. Boat ramp
- g. Modern comfort station
- h. Administrative area
- i. Electrical, sewer, and water systems
- j. Shelters
- k. Courtesy docks
- l. Latrines
- m. Site facilities (tables, garbage cans, etc.)
- n. Directional signing
- o. Interpretive signing

##### 2. Day-use Area (at Northeast end of Lake)

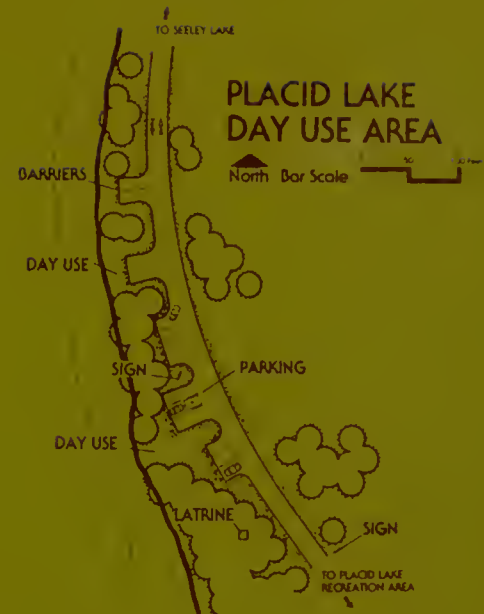
- a. Day-use parking
- b. Signing
- c. Latrine
- d. Site facilities (tables, garbage cans, etc.)

##### 3. Construction methods and design considerations

a. Entrance gate: The design concepts for this facility have not been fully formulated. However, it is intended to consist of a metal gate with probably a wood and rock structure on either side of the entrance. Some landscape mounds could also be incorporated. The area where the entrance is to be located is not heavily timbered. No trees will be removed.

b. Area orientation: This will consist of a pull-off from the main road and a map sign to orient people to the location of facilities within the site. The day-use area will also be shown on this map. The interpretive signing will also be installed in this vicinity. They will consist of anodized aluminum signs mounted on metal posts. The sign colors will be black and gold. Footpaths and minor landscape modification will be required.

c. Roadwork: Roads will be designed to maintain cross-slope drainage wherever practical. In some areas drainage structures will be required. The roads will be constructed with a gravel base and asphalt surfacing. Cuts and fills will be kept to a minimum. The most significant cut and fill will occur at the southern end of the south camp loop. Here a cross slope of approximately 20% will be traversed at an 8% to 10% grade. It is not presently visualized that any cuts or fills exceeding three feet will be necessary. The new road system is designed to take advantage of existing road scars wherever possible. The easternmost camp loop and the boat trailer parking are located in areas not previously disturbed, however. Parking spots will be located to lie within existing openings in the tree cover. Backslopes and disturbed areas will be reseeded with native grasses. The new areas to be disturbed will consist of approximately 1.5 acres.





BOAT LAUNCHING

2.0 **Water supply:** The water supply will consist of a well, with a 1000-gallon capacity, which will pump 1100 or 1200 gallons daily into the boat-launching area. The well will be located in the area of the boat-launching area, and the pump will be located in the area of the boat-launching area.

3.0 **Boat-launching area:** The boat-launching area will consist of a ramp to the lake, a boat-launching area, a lavatory, urinal, and toilet, and a boat-launching area. The boat-launching area will be located in the area of the boat-launching area, and the boat-launching area will be located in the area of the boat-launching area.

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12.0 **Boat-launching area:** The boat-launching area will consist of a ramp to the lake, a boat-launching area, a lavatory, urinal, and toilet, and a boat-launching area. The boat-launching area will be located in the area of the boat-launching area, and the boat-launching area will be located in the area of the boat-launching area.

13.0 **Boat-launching area:**

The site will initially be used for one year, from the end of September. If needed, the site may also be used for winter use.



TYPICAL CAMPSITE

A resident caretaker will be employed during the summer season to provide directions and information. He will also be responsible for day-to-day maintenance of the site and the collection of use fees. The caretaker will also be responsible for collecting the garbage throughout the area and depositing it in the dumpster. The garbage will be collected from the dumpster by a commercial hauler and disposed of in a legal sanitary landfill.

The standard rules and regulations of the Department will apply to this site. Some of the more important of these include: a limit on length of stay, restricting vehicles to established roads, and restrictions on disturbance of vegetation and topsoil. These regulations will be primarily enforced by the caretaker. However, the caretaker has no legal enforcement capabilities. When he encounters any enforcement problems, he will rely on Fish and Game wardens.



## II. DESCRIPTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT

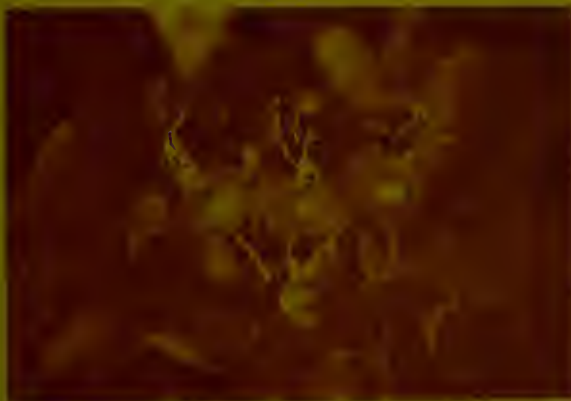
### A. Natural

#### 1. Topography and Geology

Placid Lake (el. 4121) lies in the Clearwater Valley, an area bordered on the east by the Swan Range and on the west by the Mission Mountains. Like many lakes and potholes in the region, it was formed by the melting of an ice block--part of a receding Pleistocene Mountain glacier.

Ice in Placid Creek's ancestral valley once extended from north of the lake all the way to Blanchard Creek, about 10 miles to the south. Its meltwaters later left widespread debris, including sand and gravel and a mantle of till--the first underlying the proposed campground, the latter beneath the day-use area. Beneath the mantle of glacial debris lies the Belt series of Pre-Cambrian Age. Neither spot has unique physical features or exploitable mineral resources.





## 6. Vegetation

Both parts of the proposed recreation area are forested; the plant communities show evidence of man's disturbance. Altogether, there are 76 species of vascular plants (2 fern allies, 7 conifers, and 67 flowering <sup>4</sup>), including some aquatic vegetation in two bogs near the campground. Although the endangered Howell's gumweed (*Grindelia howellii*) occurs nearby, it is not found on the proposed development sites. As for the lake itself, water quality studies have turned up 23 species of large aquatic plants (including water lily and considerable growths of pondweed, *Potamogeton* spp.); and several algae such as *Anabaena flos-aquae* and *Aphanizomenon flos-aquae*.

In general, east shore vegetation looks like this: the proposed day-use area at the lake's north end is comparatively mesic, its plant life uniform. The canopy consists of ponderosa pine, with a few other evergreens and deciduous trees; and the badly trampled understory has Wood's rose, Sitka alder, creek dogwood, and several common herbs. The main campground is somewhat arid, but it also borders on the lakeshore and two bogs. The drier portion has a canopy of Douglas fir (with ponderosa pine and tamarack) and an understory dominated by snowberry, ground mahonia, and various sedges. Plant succession is not complete because the area has been repeatedly disturbed by road building, logging, and uncontrolled recreational use; but in terms of habitat types (Pfister's et. al. 1977 system), the vegetation most closely resembles the Douglas fir-snowberry association.

Near the bogs are small stands of Engelmann spruce, and, at the edges, willows, creek dogwood, Sitka alder, and several herbs, including Greenlin's buttercup. So far, the only aquatic plants observed in the bogs are water lentil and Canadian waterweed. For a detailed list of vascular plants in the proposed recreation area, see Appendix B.

## 7. Fish

Placid Lake's native fish include cutthroat trout, Dolly Varden, mountain whitefish, northern squawfish, peamouth, and largescale and longnose suckers. Among the exotics are rainbow and brook trout, largemouth bass, yellow perch, pumpkinseed (sunfish), and kokanee (salmon). Of these, the game fish most commonly caught are, in order, kokanee, rainbow trout, cutthroat trout, and Dolly Varden. All species are self-sustaining except the rainbow which are stocked periodically.





Most fishermen troll the lake, although there is fall kokanee snagging at the Placid Creek Inlet. Pressures are moderate (about 8000 fisherman days during the 1975-76 season\*), and the lake's average catch rate at 1 fish per hour is considered good. Placid Creek itself is an excellent producer of brook trout and some cutthroat; and Owl Creek has rainbow, brown, and cutthroat trout, and Dolly Varden. During the 1975-76 season, Placid Creek provided about 170 fisherman days, while pressures on Owl Creek were apparently light.



#### 8. Wildlife

The proposed recreation area is a small, fairly diverse site with wildlife habitat ranging from open forest to bogs. Despite heavy recreational use, it still supports a few resident birds, small mammals, reptiles, and amphibians; other wildlife, including several kinds of big game, visit the site. The sites are not important big game winter range; however, adjacent slopes and benches to the north and east are used. The sites do not harbor any known threatened or endangered species.

The area's summer or year-long residents include American kestrels, ruffed grouse, mourning doves, killdeer, spotted sandpipers, belted kingfishers, chickadees, and several other song birds; mammals such as shrews, chipmunks, mink, muskrats, short-tailed weasels, striped skunks, and snowshoe hares; and three common reptiles and amphibians--red-sided garter snakes, western painted turtles, and Rocky Mountain toads.

Transitory species of the site are various waterfowl including Canada geese, mergansers, grebes, teal, and other ducks; raptors such as bald eagles, osprey, and red-tailed hawks; and several shore and song birds. Visiting mammals include black bears, white-tailed deer, coyotes, bobcats, beaver, porcupines, and others. For a more complete list of the area's wildlife, see Appendix C.

\* Each fisherman day is a stop of no more than one day at a fishing place.

## D. Human

### 1. Archaeological Resources

Western Montana was traditionally the home of three Indian tribes--the Flathead, Pend d'Oreille, and Kutenai--all members of a "Plateau" or intermountain culture found between the Cascades and the Rockies. Fairly mobile people, they used the region's valleys for hunting, food gathering, and travel; and after the early 1700's (when they obtained horses) they even rode over the Continental Divide in search of buffalo.

The Flatheads, who owned more horses than the other tribes, routinely ranged from their homes in the Bitterroot Valley to the Continental Divide, and perhaps from present-day Arlee to the Big Hole River. According to Carling Malouf, their "hunting and gathering" lands include the Clearwater valley and other Blackfoot River tributaries; in fact, the Seeley Lake country was considered "excellent hunting," and the Blackfoot drainage had abundant plant foods such as canas, berries, and pine nuts.<sup>5</sup>

Though archaeological finds have been made at Swan Lake and along the Clearwater, a recent survey at Placid has yielded nothing. The proposed recreation area is heavily used by recreationists, and any oboriginal materials there apparently have been obscured.<sup>6</sup>

### 2. Historical Resources

Settlement and occupation of the Placid area began in the early 20th century. The land surrounding the lake was first logged at this time also, about twenty years before the first cabins were constructed. At first, the loggers floated timber down Owl Creek (Placid's outlet stream), but in the 1930's a new road brought access from the east.

Placid's first cabins were built in the 1920's.

Nothing at or near the lake is either included--or is thought eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. The same is true for the Montana State Register.

## 3. Population

	AREA		
	Seeley Lake Blackfoot Census Area and adjacent area	Missoula County	Fish & Game Region 2
1870	1,700	5,265	13,160
1940	2,100	72,500	127,000
1990	2,600	89,200	144,000
2000	3,200	106,300	167,000

<sup>1</sup> Missoula, Mineral, Powell, Granite, Deer Lodge and several other counties.

The population of all areas within Placid Lake is anticipated to serve is expected to continue to grow through the year 2000, while the areas immediately adjacent to Placid Lake may nearly double by 2000 and Fish and Game Region 2, exclusive of Missoula County, may grow as many as 17,000 persons, growth in terms of absolute numbers is expected to center in Missoula County and the City of Missoula through the year 2000.

## 4. Economy and Employment

For years the Clearwater country's economy has been based on timber and outdoor recreation. The area is world-famous public and private forest land, well-known recreation spots, and many of the same of them at Placid Lake dating back to the 1920's. The town of Seeley Lake itself (pop. 1000) does a brisk tourist trade, providing local lodging, meals, and supplies, etc.; but the county's real business center is Missoula, about an hour's drive away.

Timber and recreation are also important county-wide. In 1974, more than 1900 Missoula County residents worked in the lumber and wood products industry, and their total payroll was almost 19 million dollars. By way of rough comparison, the county's hotels, motels, trailer camps and camps--businesses which often profit by their connections with outdoor recreation--employed 604 people in 1972 and had receipts of 24.7 million dollars.<sup>8</sup>



## Land Use

### a. Ownership and Taxes

The land around Placid Lake is divided among (1) Champion International, which owns half of the shoreline--including portions of the north and east shores, where there are 14 cabin leases; (2) the Montana Forestry Division, which has parts of the south and west shores, and also leases 23 cabin sites, and (3) private owners at the lake's north end. As a rule, the cabin dwellers are weekend or seasonal residents.

The tracts which Champion has offered to the state are labeled as "undeveloped recreational lands" by Missoula County. Taxes on them in 1976 totalled about \$870.00.

### b. Utilities

Powerlines parallel the north Placid road and the east shore road. There are two pit latrines existing on site. No other utilities are present.

## 6. Public Recreation

### a. Placid Lake

For years, public recreationists have used the privately-owned, mostly undeveloped east shore of Placid Lake. Here they park wherever they can, then camp, swim, or launch their boats. Their numbers are hard to estimate, and the Missoula County Comprehensive Plan notes simply that Placid Lake "can and (does) support intensive recreational activity."

There are, however, Forest Service traffic counts for the Placid area. Based on these and some Forest Service estimates of relative to, it appears that as many as 21,664 "recreational" visitors may have gone to Placid Lake between June and December

Public recreationists are Placid cabin owners and their guests.

of 1976. At 4.1 persons per vehicle (a factor reported in Fish and Game's 1976 "Flathead Fee Study"), that would mean 88,922 visitors--62,861 of them in June, July, and August. This figure is slightly exaggerated as cabin owners were counted also.

The Montana Department of Fish and Game also has a general picture of east shore users--the result of weekend surveys in July and August of 1977, when 121 groups were interviewed. The department found that: (1) most of the people, 103 groups, were from Missoula, Lewis and Clark, and Flathead counties--very few from out-of-state; (2) three-fourths of them were staying overnight, mostly in trailers or campers--though a dozen used tents and a few slept in their cars; (3) over half the groups questioned said that they visited the east shore three or more times a year; and (4) the favorite activities at the lake were, in descending order of popularity: fishing and resting/relaxing (tied for first); motorized boating, swimming or wading; water-skiing, picnicking; and a number of others, including motorcycling, bike riding, and hiking.

The study revealed that most present users of the area wish to have improved restroom facilities and drinking water developed. Most of the present users are fairly well satisfied with the area as it exists. This was anticipated by the department's non-users were not interviewed.

### b. Missoula County

According to its 1976 Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan, Missoula County has 21 state or federal nonurban recreation sites, most of them offering both camping and boating. Local governments, on the other hand, provide no nonurban recreation sites at all, though Missoula County does own about 100 acres of undeveloped parkland southeast of Seeley Lake. It will probably remain open space.






Besides showing little desire to leave "critical decisions concerning recreation opportunities to local and modification to federal and state agencies, the recreation plan suggests that: (1) state and federal agencies should be encouraged to develop day use sites, especially near water, within 50 miles of Missoula; and (2) the Clearwater lakes could be viewed as a "regional recreation complex--that is, an area serving metropolitan and multi-county users.



SEELEY LAKE

SEELEY LAKE

### Legend

-  Champion International
-  State Forestry Division
-  Champion Donation
-  Privately Owned
-  North
- Bar Scale**  
0 1 2 miles

# Placid Area

DAY USE AREA

RECREATION AREA

PLACID LAKE

SALMON LAKE

EXISTING TRANSMISSION LINE



## 7. Traffic

For several years employees of the Lolo National Forest have monitored traffic in the Placid Lake Area--especially on the main Placid Creek Road (349) which runs west from Highway 209. Vehicle counts were made from May to August, 1968; in July, 1974; and from June to December, 1976--and there were also some surveys of drivers' destinations.

In 1976, the Placid Creek Road had over 32,500 vehicles between June and December. Most were counted before October, and the busiest month was July, when there were about 8800, including an estimated 7100 recreationists and 725 loggers.

Not surprisingly, federal planners have found that most of Road 3-9's use is recreational: roughly 70% in 1976, with 10% logging-related, and 16% "public service and other" (including area residents).<sup>14</sup> Before logging and residential traffic picked up, earlier surveys put the recreational vehicle at more than 90% and suggested that most of the drivers were headed for Placid Lake. Whatever its exact percent of the total, recreational traffic is apparently on the increase: the Forest Service's 1975 Placid area study projects a yearly growth of 2 to 3%.<sup>15</sup>

## 8. Aesthetics

The Placid area is scenic, but not unusually so for western Montana. Some lakes in the Clearwater valley show more obvious human disturbance than does Placid, some show less. Most viewers, though, would agree that the setting here is fairly natural and that mountain lakes like Placid have considerable scenic value.

Use levels at Placid on summer weekends are high. Purists might consider the present traffic, boater, and camper levels objectionable. However, vegetation acts as a noise level buffer as well as providing shade and relative seclusion. In some areas, however, the soil has been compacted beyond its ability to support vegetation.

Another matter of concern is the proposed Co Strip-to-Bot Springs 500 KV power lines, which--if the Montana Board of Natural Resources recommendation is accepted, could run just southwest of Placid Lake possibly within the existing power corridor. Physically, such lines would not affect the recreation area; visually, their impact is hard to determine at this time.

For detailed information on the lines--and how their route will be decided--see Appendix D.

## 9. Sanitation, Health and Public Safety

Through an informal arrangement with Champion Internationa, Fish and Game already helps maintain the proposed recreation area, but the site is sometimes littered. There is no developed source of water and the pit latrines definitely need to be replaced.

The Missoula County Sheriff's Department now patrols the Placid Lake area. The department wardens also patrol both the land and water areas by car and boat. Swimmers and boaters are presently using the sandy areas of the lake. Logging and cabin site traffic is routed through the proposed development area.

## III. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

### A. Natural

#### 1. Topography and Geology

Development and use of the recreation site will have little effect on the area's landforms, and no impact on mineral resources or unique physical features.

#### 2. Soils

The proposed action will mean continued--though perhaps reduced--disturbance and compaction of the area's soils. Previously unused lands will be disturbed, and people will still trample soils which, although not highly erodible, could over time become more compacted. But there will also be much improvement: (1) less pressure on some already-trampled sites and (2) restrictions on where motor vehicles can be driven.

#### 4. Air Quality

During construction of the campground, there will be some local increases in the level of dust and exhaust emissions near Placid Lake. When the project is completed, the department expects about the same amount of traffic, dust, and campfire smoke as there is today in the area of Placid Lake, but less dust at the recreation site itself since there are plans to block the east shore road and other parts of the campground.

#### 5. Performance

Development of Placid Lake Campground from an uncontrolled camping and boating spot to a supervised recreation area will increase inputs of water quality. The proposed road system will limit land disturbances (and erosion) caused by vehicles, while campsite and restroom construction will take pressure off shore-line areas of existing camp and restroom areas. Both will reduce sedimentation.

Also, sanitary facilities will eliminate potential disease and nutrient pollution of the lake. A drain field and several other vault toilets will be installed.

#### 6. Ground Water

The project's potential impacts on ground water are minimal. However, the water table lies deeper than 10 feet below the ground surface and the area is not a ground water recharge zone. Therefore, any impacts are expected to be very minor.

#### 7. Vegetation

The Placid project's overall impact on vegetation are hard to predict, however, the development of footpaths, as well as signage and driving restrictions, could stem the deterioration of the area's flora, or even improve its condition.

On the other hand, the recreation area's management will destroy nearly 1.5 acres of vegetation, most of it native grass areas with herbivores despite heavy use. Two other factors--the soil or nutrient or heavy-equipment operators at the work sites, and visitors who actually stay on roads and paths--will figure in the project's real impact on vegetation. Both could prove a reverse.

#### 7. Fish

The proposed project will have little effect on the area's fisheries, so no pollution of the surface water is getting the way the fish populations are self-sustaining, with the exception of the lake's.

#### 8. Wildlife

Development and use of the recreation area should have little effect on wildlife. The loss of some cover, the disturbance of riparian construction and restrictions, will disrupt the normal activities of several small animals. But most of the site is already used for camping, so most species have a "just-bare" are expected to continue their continuing presence at the lake.

One positive effect of the project would be a further enforcement of state fish and game laws in the area through the employment of a caretaker.

#### B. Human

##### 1. Archaeological and Historical Resources

Survey of the proposed recreation area have produced no archaeological finds of any kind, and no historic resources are eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. The State Historic Preservation Office has certified the project will have no effect on these resources.

## 2. Population, Economy, and Employment

As one of many recreation spots in eastern Missoula County, the Placid Lake development will have a negligible impact on the area's population, economy, and employment. If Fish and Game acquires the land, it will never be used for logging or cabins; thus Missoula County could lose about 32 acres of second-growth timber and several small construction jobs.

Conversely, area businesses and workers (who receive contracts) might help to develop the recreation site. This could mean about ten four-month jobs. Following construction, the campground would be managed by a single Fish and Game seasonal employee. Also, Seeley Lake merchants stand to profit from the development--especially if its users need provisions, gasoline, or meals.

## 3. Land Use

### a. Options and Taxes

The proposed Placid Lake project will have little effect on the area's land use patterns. Champion's offer itself asks that the tracts be used--as they are now--for recreation. The property will be removed from the county tax rolls.

Acceptance of the Champion offer will obviously end the company's options for administration of the land: (1) continuing to permit unsupervised public use of the tracts, (2) posting the property, and (3) subdividing, selling, or logging the sites.

### b. Utilities

The project will also have little effect on the area's utilities. Powerlines adjacent to the proposed campground will be tapped, and those along the east shore eventually buried. New water and septic systems are parts of the development.

## 4. Public Recreation

Fish and Game's proposed action will have several effects on the recreational use of Placid Lake. The project is expected to: (1) guarantee public access to the lake; (2) preserve two popular recreation sites for the long-term enjoyment of the public; (3) broaden the user base at Placid; (4) cause a slight shift in user groups from those who enjoy a more primitive environment to those who can accept a more controlled and regulated facility; and (5) increase controls over public users.

- Guaranteed access - Placid's shoreline owners could end public access to the lake. The proposed action eliminates that possibility.
- Site preservation - The tracts cannot sustain a controlled use without sustaining more physical damage. The recreation area design insures that the site will be developed to limit physical damage to the extent this is possible, while applying landscape architecture principles to insure aesthetic compatibility.
- User base - Signs on Highway 209, and the recreation area's appearance on state maps, will bring new users to the lake. They will include nonresidents and Montanans not previously aware of Placid Lake. The greatest impact should be from the latter since Highway 209 is not a major tourist route.

Broadening the range of Placid Lake users should not mean major changes in their numbers. After a rush of county residents curious about the site, the east shore should have about as many visitors as it has today. Use will increase as population and leisure time increase.

Long-term predictions are complicated by the fact that use of the Placid area (at least the amount of recreational traffic there) is already growing at the rate of 2% to 3% a year.<sup>16</sup> Naturally, a new recreation area would become a factor in that growth--but only to a point: the site facilities will only handle a limited number of visitors.









 PLACID LAKE  
RECREATION AREA

#### IV. MEASURES TO MINIMIZE ADVERSE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

Any action for the development of this number of projects is likely to disturb these remnants of several already-used areas. To minimize or reduce such impacts, Fish and Game will hold the construction of wildlife and riparian areas to a minimum. We further reduce the project's adverse effects, and to enhance the quality of the river, the Department will also:

1. design, construct, and raised graded roads and bridges across the river to traffic;
2. plant trees and shrubs to screen the new facilities, especially near river's left bank construction. Plantings should also slow bank soil erosion and sedimentation;
3. remove rocks to eliminate snags and fills;
4. install signs in the main river cut by:
  - (a) construction, the banks of canals and levees, graveling, and/or filling sections of the river;
5. introduce regular garbage pickup and a regular sewage system;
6. provide an attractive but simple recreation area to meet the reasonable needs of the project's immediate activities.

Since the proposed project is not expected to disturb environmental resources or the University of Montana's Own Wildlife Management Plan, the Department of Fish and Game will allow the construction areas to be useful for bird and mammal surveys and to allow the DWR creek researchers to provide data on their impact, or by collecting water samples in the summer to test reports on water treatment. It may, in future, test the water chemistry.

#### V. UNAVOIDABLE ADVERSE IMPACTS

Despite efforts to minimize the adverse effects of the proposed project will still (1) cause an increased level of construction emissions, and noise during the construction period; (2) contribute to soil disturbance and compaction; (3) destroy nearby riparian vegetation; (4) disrupt the normal activities of nearby water animals; (5) create occasional problems with litter and vandalism of public property; and (6) remove the property from the river to collect.

#### VI. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LOCAL SHORT-TERM USES OF MAN'S ENVIRONMENT AND THE MAINTENANCE AND ENHANCEMENT OF LONG-TERM PRODUCTIVITY

Construction work at Plant 2000 will cause various short-term disruptions of the environment--increases in road dust, exhaust emissions and noise, and disturbances of vegetation, soil, and water animals. These (along with some impacts on wildlife by noise, the loss of trees, and temporary problems with litter, vandalism, and the displacement of people and domestic life (the new development) will be the immediate costs of the project.

Working against that will be: (1) a guarantee of permanent policy progress to the U.S.; (2) quality recreational facilities for future generations; (3) long-range improvements in the agriculture and condition of the lake's near shore; and (4) systematic management of the site.

#### VII. IRREVERSIBLE AND IRRETRIEVABLE COMMITMENTS OF RESOURCES

The land itself used by the construction equipment with the 1980s monetary commitment is irreversible. The area will be committed to recreational use in perpetuity, under the terms of the Federal and and Water Conservation Fund agreements. Therefore, any potential for other uses of the property will be eliminated.

## VIII. ALTERNATIVES TO THE PROPOSED ACTION

### A. No Action

One of the Department of Fish and Game's option is simply to refuse the Champion International donations at Placid Lake. What would happen then to the lake's east shore--and to public recreation there--is impossible to say. Champion could: (1) continue to allow public use of its property; (2) post the land; (3) subdivide or log the tracts; or (4) a combination of the above.

These options would create impacts ranging from a continuation of present unsanitary, uncontrolled overuse to the loss of the recreation opportunity and the degradation of the site by loss of tree cover and possibly soil erosion.

### B. Design Alternatives

The department also has a full range of design options--from little or no development at the site to more than what the plans now show, but if the department goal is providing quality recreation in a setting that can be conserved, neither extreme makes much sense. Left unprotected, both areas will continue to deteriorate; if over-developed, monetary and environmental costs will outweigh the benefits to society.

Perhaps a more useful approach is to view the development plan as the maximum which will be implemented. Monetary limits may force the proposed developments to be constructed in phases. The Master Site Plan is schematic to the extent that individual facilities or sites may have to be field adjusted to take advantage of precise openings in vegetative cover or to avoid terrain features which have aesthetic value.

Another option would be to design the facilities for other types of use or to place the facilities in different

locations. To provide for other types of use would decrease the flexibility of the developments and would not provide for the demands of the public. To locate the specific developments in different areas within the site would: (1) disrupt more vegetation; (2) not separate uses; (3) complicate traffic circulation; (4) possibly not comply with health regulations, and (5) would not satisfy desires as well as the proposed Master Site Plan is expected to.



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## XI. CONTACTS AND CONTRIBUTORS

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## XII. APPENDICES

- A. Owl Creek Aquatic Study
- B. Vascular Plants of the Proposed Placid Lake Recreation Area
- C. Wildlife of the Proposed Placid Lake Recreation Area
- D. Colstrip 500 kV Lines





APPENDIX B

VASCULAR PLANTS OF THE PROPOSED PLACID LAKE RECREATION AREA \*

<u>Common name</u>	<u>Scientific name</u>	<u>Common name</u>	<u>Scientific name</u>
fern allies:		flowering plants:	
common scouring-rush	<i>Equisetum hymale</i> L.	common yarrow	<i>Achillea millefolium</i> L.
marsh horsetail	<i>Equisetum palustre</i> L.	baneberry	<i>Actaea rubra</i> (Ait.) Willd.
conifers:		bentgrass	<i>Agrostis alba</i> L.
mountain juniper	<i>Juniperus communis</i> L.	Sitka alder	<i>Alnus sinuata</i> (Regel) Rydb.
Rocky Mountain juniper	<i>Juniperus scopulorum</i> Sarg.	Geyer pussytoes	<i>Antennaria geyeri</i> Gray
tamarack	<i>Larix occidentalis</i> Nutt.	field pussytoes	<i>Antennaria neglecta</i> Greene
Engelmann spruce	<i>Picea engelmannii</i> Parry	common burdock	<i>Arctium minus</i> (Hill) Bernh.
lodgepole pine	<i>Pinus contorta</i> Dougl.	kinnikinnick	<i>Arctostaphylos uva-ursi</i> (L.) Spreng.
ponderosa pine	<i>Pinus ponderosa</i> Dougl.	dragon sagewort	<i>Artemisia dracunculus</i> L.
Douglas fir	<i>Pseudotsuga menziesii</i> (Mirbel) Franco	prairie sage	<i>Artemisia ludoviciana</i> Nutt.
		leafy aster	<i>Aster foliaceus</i> Lindl.

\*Survey by Thomas J. Watson, Jr.

Common name

arrowleaf balsamroot  
 creeping Oregon-grape  
 water birch  
 nodding beggarticks  
 Japanese brome  
 Parry's bluebell  
 spotted knapweed  
 white goosefoot  
 pipsissewa  
 Douglas' waterhemlock  
 Canadian thistle  
 bull thistle  
 Columbia clematis  
 creek dogwood  
 black hawthorn  
 Sierra fairy-bell  
 Canadian waterweed  
 western rye-grass  
 fireweed

Scientific name

*Balsamorhiza sagittata* (Pursh) Nutt.  
*Eriogonum repens* Lindl.  
*Betula occidentalis* Hook.  
*Bidens cernua* L.  
*Bromus japonicus* Thunb.  
*Campanula parryi* Gray  
*Pentaurea maculosa* Lam.  
*Chenopodium album* L.  
*Chimaphila umbellata* (L.) Bart.  
*Pisuta douglasii* (DC) Coult. & Rose  
*Cirsium arvense* (L.) Scop.  
*Cirsium vulgare* (Savi) Tenore  
*Clematis columbiana* (Nutt.) T & G.  
*Cornus stolonifera* Michx.  
*Fraxinus douglasii* Lindl.  
*Disporum trachycarpum* (Wats.) Benth. & Hook.  
*Elyda canadensis* Rich.  
*Elymus glaucus* Buckl.  
*Epilobium angustifolium* L.

Common name

Watson's willow-weed  
 pale dogtooth-violet  
 woods strawberry  
 fragrant bedstraw  
 sticky purple geranium  
 roundleaf alumroot  
 water lentil  
 twinflower  
 bearberry honeysuckle  
 silvery lupine  
 corn mint  
 Hooker's evening-primrose  
 common timothy  
 nippleseed plantain  
 quaking aspen  
 black cottonwood  
 sticky cinquefoil  
 self-heal  
 one-sided wintergreen  
 Gmelin's buttercup

Scientific name

*Epilobium watsonii* Barbey  
*Erythronium grandiflorum* Pursh  
*Fragaria vesca* L.  
*Galium triflorum* Michx.  
*Geranium viscosissimum* F. & M.  
*Heuchera cyindrica* Dougl.  
*Lemna minor* L.  
*Linnaea borealis* L.  
*Lonicera involucrata* (Rich.) Banks  
*Lupinus argenteus* Pursh  
*Mentha arvensis* L.  
*Oenothera hookeri* T. & G.  
*Phleum pratense* L.  
*Plantago major* L.  
*Populus tremuloides* Michx.  
*Populus trichocarpa* T. & G.  
*Potentilla glandulosa* Lindl.  
*Prunella angustifolia* L.  
*Pyrola asarifolia* L.  
*Ranunculus acris* L.

<u>Common name</u>	<u>Scientific name</u>
Wood's rose	<i>Rosa woodsii</i> Lindl.
red raspberry	<i>Rubus idaeus</i> L.
chimbleberry	<i>Rubus parviflorus</i> Nutt.
western dock	<i>Rumex occidentalis</i> Wats.
marsh skullcap	<i>Scutellaria galericulata</i> L.
soapberry	<i>Shepherdia canadensis</i> (L.) Nutt.
false spikenard	<i>Smilacina racemosa</i> (L.) Desf.
smooth goldenrod	<i>Solidago gigantea</i> Ait.
shiny-leaf spiraea	<i>Spiraea betulifolia</i> Pall.
Richardson's needlegrass	<i>Stipa richardsonii</i> Link
common snowberry	<i>Symphoricarpos albus</i> (L.) Blake
common dandelion	<i>Taraxacum officinale</i> Weber
western meadowrue	<i>Thalictrum occidentale</i> Gray
stinging nettle	<i>Urtica dioica</i> L.
common mullein	<i>Verbascum thapsus</i> L.
American brooklime	<i>Veronica americana</i> Schwein.
slender cinquefoil	<i>Potentilla gracilis</i> Dougl.

## APPENDIX C

## WILDLIFE OF THE PROPOSED PLACID LAKE RECREATION AREA

<u>Common name</u>	<u>Scientific Name</u>	<u>Common name</u>	<u>Scientific name</u>
shrews - R	<i>Sorex</i> spp.	grebes - V	<i>Pelecanus</i> spp.
chipmunks - R	<i>Eutamias</i> spp.	great blue heron - V	<i>Ardea herodias</i>
golden-mantled squirrel - R	<i>Citellus lateralis</i>	Canada goose - V	<i>Branta canadensis</i>
red squirrel - R	<i>Tamiasciurus hudsonicus</i>	mallard - V	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>
black bear - V	<i>Ursus americanus</i>	pintail - V	<i>Anas acuta</i>
mink - R	<i>Mustela vison</i>	teal, green-winged - V	<i>Anas carolinensis</i>
coyote - V	<i>Canis latrans</i>	teal, blue-winged - V	<i>Anas discors</i>
bobcat - V	<i>Lynx rufus</i>	wood duck - V	<i>Aix sponsa</i>
beaver - V	<i>Castor canadensis</i>	merganser - V	<i>Mergus</i> spp.
muskrat - R	<i>Ondatra zibethica</i>	bald eagle - V	<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>
porcupine - V	<i>Erethizon dorsatum</i>	red-tailed hawk - V	<i>Buteo jamaicensis</i>
snowshoe hare - R	<i>Lepus americanus</i>	osprey - V	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>
white-tailed deer - V	<i>Odocoileus virginianus</i>	American kestrel - R	<i>Falco sparverius</i>
raccoon - V	<i>Procyon lotor</i>		
striped skunk - R	<i>Mephitis mephitis</i>		
red fox - V	<i>Vulpes fulva</i>		
short-tailed weasel - R	<i>Mustela erminea</i>		

R - resident; summer or year-long  
 V - visitor; does not breed on site

<u>Common name</u>	<u>Scientific name</u>	<u>Common name</u>	<u>Scientific name</u>
chickadees - R	<i>Parus spp.</i>	eastern kingbird - R	<i>Tyrannus tyrannus</i>
waxwings - R	<i>Bombusilla spp.</i>	Steller's jay - R	<i>Cyanocitta stelleri</i>
warblers - R	<i>Vermivora spp.</i>	common raven - V	<i>Corvus corax</i>
western tanager - R	<i>Piranga ludoviciana</i>	Clark's nutcracker - R	<i> Nucifraga columbiana</i>
western painted turtle - R	<i>Chrysemys picta belli</i>		
Rocky Mountain toad - R	<i>Bufo woodhousei woodhousei</i>		
red-sided garter snake - R	<i>Thamnophis sirtalis parietalis</i>		
ruffed grouse - R	<i>Bonasa umbellus</i>		
spruce grouse - V	<i>Canachites canadensis</i>		
American coot - V	<i>Fulica americana</i>		
killdeer - R	<i>Charadrius vociferus</i>		
spotted sandpiper - R	<i>Actitis macularia</i>		
Wilson's snipe - V	<i>Capella gallinago</i>		
black tern - V	<i>Chlidonias niger</i>		
mourning dove - R	<i>Zenaidura macroura</i>		
common nighthawk - R	<i>Chordeiles minor</i>		
belted kingfisher - R	<i>Megasceryle alexon</i>		
downy woodpecker - R	<i>Pendrocoptes pulescens</i>		

November 26, 1977

Paris Division  
Montana Department of  
Fish and Game

Helena, Montana 59601

Dear Sirs:

This letter is in answer to Mr. Tom Basket's letter of inquiry regarding the proposed Colstrip-Hot Springs 500 kv lines.

The Board of Natural Resources and Conservation has conditionally approved a corridor which runs as shown on the enclosed map. The corridor is two miles wide -- one mile on either side of the line drawn on the map. ("Transmission corridor" means a means a linear tract of land, two miles or less in width, where a transmission line may be located.)

Placid Lake lies just northeast of the corridor and the line will probably be visible from the north and east shorelines of the lake. There will be two transmission lines running side by side and occupying a strip of land about 300 feet wide. The two lines will be built somewhere within the two-mile-wide corridor, but not necessarily exactly along the line drawn on the map. The Department of Natural Resources and Conservation is currently doing a "center-line" evaluation to decide exactly where within the corridor the lines will be built. We will recommend a centerline to the Board, the Board then will either approve it or make changes as they see fit. So, you can see that the actual lines could pass along the edge of the lake, if the Board approves a centerline near the northeast edge of the corridor in T16N, R15E. It is highly unlikely that the Department will recommend this to the Board -- we are quite aware of the visual impact of the lines and will probably want the line as far southwest in the corridor as possible.

The State-approved corridor crosses land managed by federal agencies -- in this case the Forest Service -- and these agencies may choose not to grant easements through the state-approved corridor. The federal agencies, headed by Bonneville Power Administration, are in the process of doing a Transmission Environmental Report, to evaluate the relative merits of a number of corridors alternate to the state-approved one. Several of their alternates pass near Missoula and entirely avoid the Placid Lake-Jocko Pass area. The final federal decision will be made by the Secretaries of Interior and Agriculture. If they refuse an easement, then the state (the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation) will have to start again on another corridor evaluation. We are keeping in close touch with the federal study in the hope of avoiding conflict or duplication of effort.

ENERGY PLANNING DIVISION  
FOR ENERGY DEVELOPMENT

35 SOUTH EWING, HELENA, MONTANA 59601

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REGISTRATION & PERMITS  
DIVISION



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Montana Guides and Outfitters Association,  
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Burlington Northern Railroad, c/o Don Bettleton, 700 South Avenue West,  
Missoula, Montana, 59801  
Placid Lake Cebir Owners Association, c/o Tim Garrity, President, Missoula,  
Montana, 59801  
Seeley Lake Chamber of Commerce, Seeley Lake, Montana, 59858  
Champion International, Box 3598, Missoula, Montana, 59801  
Eralis Corrick  
Bob Kelley  
Joseph S. Siminski, Property Manager

INDIVIDUALS

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